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The reward for information leading to the capture of Osama bin Laden and other terrorist leaders could go up to \$50 million under a bipartisan House bill slated for floor action this week.

The Counter-Terrorist and Narco-Terrorist Rewards Program Act (HR 3782) would amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (PL 84-885) to increase the maximum award available under the department's rewards program. The measure also would expand the eligibility criteria for a reward and authorize non-monetary awards.

The program, established in 1984 (PL 98-533), provides rewards for information that prevents, frustrates, or favorably resolves acts of international terrorism against U.S. citizens or property throughout the world. The maximum reward for such information on terrorism and narcoterrorism would increase from \$5 million to \$25 million in most cases, although the 2001 anti-terrorism law (PL 107-56) authorizes the secretary of State to offer larger rewards if it is determined more is needed to combat terror or to defend the United States against terrorist acts.

This bill, sponsored by Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., chairman of the International Relations Committee, also would enable Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to double the reward to \$50 million for bin Laden. He has already authorized a reward of up to \$25 million for information leading to the capture of bin Laden and other key al Qaeda leaders.

The fiscal 2004 supplemental appropriations law for the Iraq and Afghan wars (PL 108-106), enacted last November, provided \$50 million for rewards for information leading to the capture of bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

In the past seven years, the United States has paid more than \$49 million to 29 people who provided credible information that put terrorists behind bars or prevented acts of international terrorism worldwide.

The program played a significant role in the arrest of Ramzi Yousef, who was convicted in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

The bill also would give the State Department flexibility in the type of rewards it gives, allowing for the provision of vehicles, appliances and other commodities instead of cash.

In addition, it clarifies that a reward need not be tied to a specific act of terrorism.

Ranking Democrat Tom Lantos of California and Mark Steven Kirk, R-Ill., cosponsored the bill, approved unanimously by Hyde's committee Feb. 25.

Robert Tomkin contributed to this story.